

BOOK REVIEW

Bray, M., Kwo, O., & Jokić, B. (eds) (2016). *Researching private supplementary tutoring. Methodological lessons from diverse cultures.* Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong, and Geneva: Springer.^{1,2}

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Can we promise money for completing a questionnaire? What happens if a researcher's physical integrity might be endangered in the field or could a researcher of the opposite sex interview in an Islamic country? What should we do if we have to interview under trees, in noise, or if the principal of the selected school considers the otherwise approved questionnaire politically sensitive and does not allow the researcher into the institution? In the study volume edited by Mark Bray et al., the authors talk about the methodological peculiarities and difficulties with full openness which often appear in the course of the research but are rarely discussed. There is a common thread behind the volume: the two most influential researches on the topic are the so-called Hong Kong Research and the Hong Kong Questionnaire. The comprehensive research on private tutoring/shadow education/out-of-school education (the conceptual framework is flexible in the volume as well) was conducted by a research team at The University of Hong Kong (led by Mark Bray). The research design and instruments developed by them were later adapted in several countries, and the methodological lessons from these researches are summarized in the volume. The Hong Kong-research and its adaptations are of particular importance because "research lagged behind the expansion and diversification of the phenomenon" – as editors said in the introduction (p. 3.). Research has been conducted in far more countries than the number of studies included in the collection, we can read a general overview of them.

Studies in other, predominantly Asian countries have been written with the same goals in mind: "the book is about research methodology, and the chapters display diversity in the cultures of research approaches" (p. 4.)

Each study emphasizes the search for equilibrium, which is a common feature of adaptations: how long the original research design and methodology can be kept in order to compare the results, and what are the peculiarities within a country that require research to be tailored to that country. Each study provides an accurate answer to this question, and the reader encounters

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¹The incorrect year of publication in the Online First version of this article was corrected in the final version.

²The name of the co-publisher, missing in the Online first version of this article was added in the online version.

quite special situations that stem from cultural differences. In addition to the search for equilibrium, each study presents its own research design and instruments in detail. In each study, special emphasis is placed on sampling, all the more so because most of the difficulties in fieldwork stem from this: do they cooperate? do they understand the content and consequences of the passive and active consent document? are the questions properly interpreted? what distorting effects will we experience? There are many problems that all researchers have encountered. In this book, we can read honest reflective interpretations from the researchers involved, which makes the writings really alive and practical. The issue of ethical considerations and dilemmas related to research is also a constant element in studies. The principle taken from the original research that teachers and students had to sign a so-called active consent, while parents had to sign a passive consent, was done in all countries, but in Cambodia, for example, parents have become cautious about signing official papers.

In addition to the statements, other dilemmas were raised, such as when the principal insisted that the interview be conducted under his or her supervision, or when there was a dilemma about the means by which respondents could be ethically encouraged to participate, whether volunteering was a condition. Especially in the light of this, it is a legitimate question that the basic condition of research is not to cause harm to anyone, that everyone should be well informed and create an atmosphere of trust.

In the volume published in 2016, we cannot get to know the research results of private tutoring, the focus is on comparative research methodology experiences. The situation of private tutoring appears in the studies through the contextual factors of the social and educational policy of the given country. Contextual analysis paint a plastic picture of tough correlations such as the relationship between school performance and labour market (in higher education) opportunities and the selection effect mechanism of private tutoring forced by the low-efficiency school system. The volume is divided into four thematic units and contains 13 studies. The four thematic units are adapted to the main research methodology used: 1. Employing Quantitative Instruments; 2. Discerning Qualities; 3. Expanding Perspectives with Mixed Approaches; 4. Learning and Comparing.

Thematic unit 1 contains 3 quantitative approach studies. Magda Nutsa Kobakhidze's study of Georgia presents Georgia's first study of shadow education based on nationally representative samples. In the Background Questionnaire of the TIMSS and PIRLS measurements, 9 nine questions on private tutoring the response of students and parents were put in (e.g. subjects, length, fee per month, intensity, perceived effectiveness, reasons for tutoring). It was found that the response of students and parents was not consistent, especially for 4th grade students. Analysing the reasons, the researchers mentioned partly the lack of information for the children and partly the differences in interpretation, the main lesson is the wording that matches the characteristics of the students (motivation in answering, difficulty of the task, and cognitive ability to perform the task).

Husaina Banu Kenayathulla presents the situation of private tutoring in Malaysia. Malaysia is one of the countries with a larger private tutoring tradition and institutional system. The demand for the high-stakes examination system is huge (80% of students received private tutoring during the primary school), but there is no measurement of the effectiveness of the system. The Hong Kong Questionnaire has been adapted to replace this. The main methodological lesson was to pay attention to national specificities, besides there were some incomprehensible issues in Malaysia, the issue of nationality was left out and care should be taken to



ensure that the pilot sample should be representative. Here, the problem arises for the first time that research is common in urban schools, which interferes with learning, and the involvement of teachers is also questionable in such cases.

Yu Zhang presents his own PhD dissertation. China examined the secondary schools of Jinan city, the topic being the relationship between shadow education and examination scores. The generalized education production function he uses tries to explore the actual effectiveness of private tutoring and the contextual factors that influence it using mathematical apparatus and models taken from econometrics. Here too, the data show that different student interpretations can skew the results, and the author points out that quality indicators are often ignored due to their difficult measurability, which is why it is worth working on several models.

The second part presents qualitative research in four studies. Boris Jokić's comparative study reports 18 months of research in Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia and Georgia. The research focused on the demand side of private tutoring (use or not use). Building on the Bronfenbrenner ecological system, the internal structure (the individual characteristics of the pupil, parental sphere, school, educational policy and the larger society) was developed. Research instruments were semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions. Qualitative data, when properly processed (multiple coding), are able to capture the explanation of the phenomena much more complexly than just a quantitative study.

Kevin W.H. Yung presents the ethical dilemmas of a study in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong's highly competitive environment, where private tutoring is natural, it examines the situation of shadow education in the English language, namely the so-called tutoring centres. The research instruments were questionnaire, interview, classroom observations, reflective writing. Yet the focus of the study is on ethical dilemmas related to the research. The reason for this is that, due to the nature of the research, the researcher has come into close personal contact with the students, and dealing with this requires serious researcher awareness.

Maryam Mariya presents a research in the Maldives. The curiosity of the study is that an ethnographic approach was applied by the researcher, data collection was carried out by classroom observation, field notes, document analysis, photographs and interviews. The ethnographic approach is particularly sensitive to ethical considerations, a detailed diagram of which illustrates their system.

Abbas Madandar Arani presents an Iranian research. Iran has been very strongly influenced by social and political conditions. The adaptation of the Hong Kong Questionnaire had to be done according to Islamic regulations and the questions were modified in several places according to the educational conditions in Iran. The difficulties of the research process are presented very plastically by the author.

The third part presents mixed approach research on the example of four countries.

Mark Bray and Ora Kwo's study presents the original Hong Kong research, as the authors put it, the research journey. Getting to know the research design step by step, the theoretical framework behind the design, and the description of the data collection process are instructive and useful for all researchers. In addition, the authors argue convincingly for the advantages of the mixed method.

Sulata Maheshwari in her research in West Bengal (India) presents data collection and analysis using a modified version of the Hong Kong Questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The main difficulties of the research were ethical and political problems, the principals



hindered planned research in several places. We may also learn about the difficulty of dealing with these issues from the study.

Saran Stewart presents research from Jamaica. The study is a good example of the use of multi-stage stratified sampling frame and two-level Hierarchical Linear Model, part of the description is the presentation of perfectly clear design elements and content constructs. The author covers all the experiences of the research process in six lessons, and the conclusion is a presentation of the specific situation in Jamaica that arises from the relationship between the researcher and the host society. The problem is the researcher's lack of cultural sensitivity and the participants are not being provided with the findings.

Mark Bray, Wei Zhang, Magda Nutsa Kobakhidze & Junyan LIU present a Cambodia research. Private tutoring is of paramount importance in the education system of a vomited country. The research was carried out in collaboration with a research group from Hong Kong University and a local NGO. We can learn about the process and advantages of this cooperation from the study. The research results go beyond the narrower topic and have also resulted in a general education policy lesson for the country.

Part 4 of the volume is a kind of synthesis of what we have read in previous studies. In his study *How Changing in Different Settings: in Methodological Lessons from Adaptation and Adjustment*, Junyan LIU details the lessons of adaptation, which include socio-cultural context, specific research interest as well as "analyst should always keep in mind the complexities of obtaining systematically comparable data, owing to diversity between and within countries" (p. 257.).

Mark Bray and Ora KWO's final study (*Organizational and Cross-Cultural Issues: Learning from Research Approaches*) captures the full complex of research in many countries. The general lessons that can be drawn from the 11 studies in this volume lead to new theoretical findings that can serve as an important basis for comparative research.

The 292 pages of the volume put the reader's attention to the test, in return the difficult topics are enveloped by the authors in such vivid storytelling that the locations come to life and the films in which we see the researcher's paths, successes and problems come to life. We travel around the countries while reading research adventures in countries with very different cultures, the scientific benefits of which, of course, can also be learned by the reader in the form of references to original research publications.

The volume is characterized by the demanding editing and execution accustomed to by Springer, and is an experience for everyone, both for those interested in the title (*Researching Private Supplementary Tutoring*) and for those interested in the subtitle (*Methodological Lessons from Diverse Cultures*).

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